



*"... Develop a comprehensive Action Plan that builds on the clean water successes over the past years and addresses three major goals: enhanced protection from public health threats posed by water pollution; more effective control of polluted runoff; and promotion of water quality protection on a watershed basis."*

Vice President Al Gore

On October 18, 1997, Vice President Gore announced a set of Clean Water initiatives to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. Over the last 25 years, the Clean Water Act has stopped billions of pounds of pollution from flowing into the Nation's rivers, lakes and streams, and doubled the number of waterways that are safe for swimming and fishing. Rivers once polluted enough to catch fire, lakes once devoid of life, and streams once used as open sewers are now restored centerpieces of healthy communities because of the Clean Water Act.

Yet, despite this significant progress, there is still much to be done to fulfill our national commitment to protect the Nation's waters. The Clean Water and Watershed Restoration Initiative proposes major initiatives to ensure healthy aquatic systems in all the national watersheds. The Interior Department has been working with USDA, EPA, and other Federal agencies to develop cooperative partnerships with the States and local governments and the public. The Vice President's action plan specifically calls on the Interior Department

to take a lead role in several areas of the plan's development.

With respect to preventing pollution of our Nation's waters, the Department will develop a strategy for ensuring that its public lands are national models and laboratories for effective watershed planning and control of polluted water. The Department, in consultation with USDA, will develop a strategy to achieve a net gain of as many as 100,000 acres of wetlands by the year 2005.

To ensure community-based watershed management, the Department will develop a strategy for enhancing partnerships with state and local agencies, tribal governments and local communities in protecting water quality on a watershed basis. And, in consultation with USDA, the Department will develop a strategy to ensure proper stewardship of federally-managed watersheds, and to restore watersheds adversely affected by past management practices. The strategy will address runoff and drainage from abandoned mines, improve road

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maintenance, and ensure coordinated watershed management, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries.

The Department's budget includes a number of program increases that support the Initiative. The Everglades and California Bay-Delta restoration projects are described in the preceding chapter. Other initiatives are discussed below.

## USGS RESEARCH

The budget includes an increase of \$16.5 million to address pollution control issues on federal lands; work with state and local agencies, tribal governments, and local communities to protect water quality on a watershed basis; investigate non-point source pollution; characterize contaminants in western reservoirs; develop new data modeling techniques and applications; design tools for understanding and managing non-point source pollution; and enhance data availability and accessibility on the Internet in a consistent, scientifically defensible format.

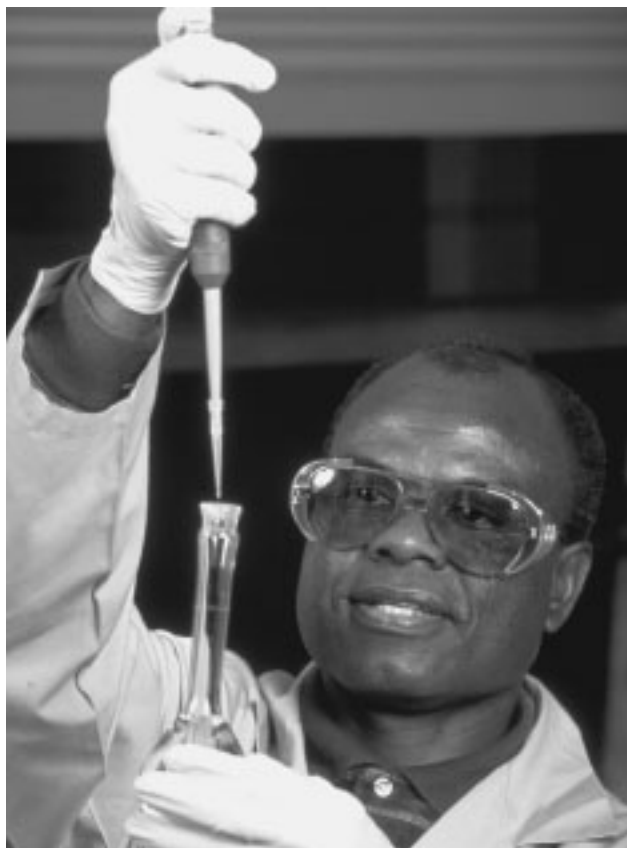
Specifically, USGS will assist States in setting their total maximum daily load allocations required by the Clean

Water Act, assess optimal approaches for pesticide monitoring in water-supply wells, and develop statewide pesticide management plans. For National Park Service watersheds, USGS will provide water quality monitoring and assessment support and will provide technical assistance on water quality issues. Using GIS, landscape analysis, on-site sampling, and modeling, USGS will evaluate nutrient loads and transport in major rivers and ground water, including inputs to estuarine systems. Biological research will be conducted in selected coastal estuaries to determine the influence of land-use practices and pollution sources on ecosystem integrity and sustainability. The USGS will use GIS and on-site sampling to determine landscape characteristics, nutrient loads, and pollutant inputs contributing to Gulf hypoxia and toxic algal blooms. The Water Resources Research Institutes competitive grants program will be used to supplement USGS investigations on non-point source pollution and impacts on ecosystems with research at universities.

The USGS will also develop state-scale geo-environmental maps that can be used by BLM and other agencies to characterize watersheds and impacts of past mining practices and will provide information needed to remediate effects of mining on biological communities of watersheds on or near DOI lands. Studies will focus on the specific impacts of metal-contaminated water, sediment, and diets on fish and will model the effects of remediation on critical stream habitats. For Bureau of Reclamation managers, USGS will provide information to improve facilities management to benefit water quality and biological resources in 20 high priority watersheds in the West. The water quality assessment of reservoirs and streams will be carried out in cooperation with Reclamation and other agencies. The USGS will make its current mapping, water quality, and biological data available on the Internet to local, state, and Federal agencies, as well as watershed councils and universities.

## BLM WATERSHED HEALTH PROJECTS

The BLM request includes an additional \$16.0 million for watershed health projects on western public lands. The centerpiece of the initiative is an additional \$6.0 million investment in the cleanup of abandoned hardrock mine sites. These sites can be a major source of water quality degradation and environmental pollution. Acid mine drainage, elevated metals concentrations, and increased sedimentation typify the impacts to water resources from some abandoned mine sites. In 1999, ongoing mine related watershed cleanup partnerships will be strengthened in Colorado,



Montana, and Utah. These pilot efforts will be expanded to Idaho, South Dakota, California, Nevada, and other States.

Riparian areas will also receive special attention under the Clean Water Initiative. Assessments of proper functioning condition will be completed for riparian areas in all of the "Lower 48" western states. An additional 300 miles of riparian corridor will be

*The following are selected annual performance goals from Interior Bureau performance plans supported by the Clean Water and Watershed Restoration Initiative:*

USGS 1999 goal: USGS will begin to provide water quantity and quality information on 1,000 U.S. watersheds which are identified in the Clean Water Action Plan as being impaired (50% of the Nation's watersheds). These data, together with water quality assessments that have been completed, will be used to develop water quality management models needed by resource managers to forecast results from changing land use.

BLM 1999 goal: In 1999, BLM will treat 1,600 miles of riparian (flowing water) and 8,000 acres of wetlands (standing water) to achieve standards.

OSM 1999 Clean Streams Initiative goal: OSM will start approximately 23 projects for acid mine drainage remediation in 1999. The initiative will also increase OSM's ability to leverage from other organizations the additional funds for these projects. OSM anticipates that 58 percent of the project costs are expected to come from outside organizations in 1999.

FWS 1999 goal: By September 30, 1999, 45,776 partnership agreements, an increase of 10 percent above the 1997 level, are reached among FWS, other Federal agencies, nations, States, Tribes, local governments, and private landowners and organizations that would provide habitat for marine mammals and migratory, endangered, interjurisdictional, and other species associated with ecosystems conserved.

BIA 1999 water quality goal: In 1999, BIA will conduct 37 wetland enhancement projects and assist Tribes in their efforts to plan and manage water resource development projects.

enhanced by applying intensive management. The BLM also plans to reduce sediment loads in salmonoid fisheries of western Oregon; to improve riverbank stability in California, Colorado, and Nevada; and to reactivate (along with USGS) key surface water monitoring stations.



## CLEAN STREAMS INITIATIVE

The ongoing OSM Clean Streams Initiative will be increased by \$1.9 million for a total of \$6.9 million to support community efforts to accelerate the cleanup of rivers and streams polluted by contaminated runoff from abandoned coal mines. With the increase, OSM will have seed money to initiate approximately 23 more projects in 1999. Depending on the actual projects selected, the increased funding could restore roughly 75 to 90 miles of acid mine drainage damaged streams. This seed money is leveraged by funds from other Federal and nonfederal sources, including, state and local governments, environmental organizations, industry, and private citizens.

## FWS PARTNERSHIPS

The FWS will implement voluntary watershed health projects with private landowners in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program with a \$2.5 million increase and the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund with a \$3.0 million increase. Partners for Fish and Wildlife funds would be used to reduce pollutant sources affecting wetlands, coastal areas, stream and riparian areas, and buffer zones. Partnership projects with public and private landowners will protect, restore, or improve habitats of trust species within critical watersheds. The North American Wetlands Conservation Fund increase will support non-regulatory private-public partnership investments to

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protect and restore wetland ecosystems in the United States, Canada, and Mexico that serve as habitat and resting areas for migratory game and nongame birds.

## **BIA WATER QUALITY AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT**

The BIA will use a \$5.0 million increase to initiate a water quality and watershed management planning program for reservation lands in the Missouri, Rio Grande, Columbia, and Colorado River basins. This

program will develop baseline data and a comprehensive analysis of water quality and tribal watershed management planning. The funds will be used to conduct water quality sampling, develop data bases on reservation and regional water quality, and analyze state and local water quality policies and programs. The resulting information will be used to target more effectively BIA's environmental protection funding, strengthen Tribe's resource management programs, and identify opportunities for cooperative, strategic watershed management planning efforts.